

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family  
Independence  
Agency

July 2001

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## Happiness is a car

### Community Motor Center serves cash assistance customers in southwest Michigan counties

By Barb Schofield, Project Zero Coordinator  
Van Buren County Family Independence  
Agency, Hartford  
Telephone (616) 621-2852

After many collaborative meetings held over several months, a new transportation service was created for public assistance customers in Van Buren and St. Joseph counties.

In Van Buren County, five local agencies and businesses—Van Buren County Family Independence Agency, Michigan Works!, Van Buren Intermediate School District, Community Motor Center, Inc. and Clark Auto Salvage of Lawrence—have combined forces to assist Work First-FIA customers in meeting their transportation needs.

A St. Joseph County collaborative including the local FIA, Michigan Works! Agency Work First subcontractor ARCH Inc., and the local Community Health agency had been working on a similar initiative.

Lack of transportation has been identified as a leading barrier for finding and maintaining a technical center to provide preventive maintenance and affordable repairs. ARCH Inc., an affiliate of Hope Network, runs the St. Joseph County satellite site. Their facility in Three Rivers provides the drop-off and delivery site for donated vehicles and refurbished vehicles for St. Joseph County customers.

#### ESS funds stretch to meet customer needs

Both the Van Buren ISD and ARCH Inc. sites have a licensed mechanic onsite to do routine repairs such as mufflers, brakes, water pumps, oil changes, etc. Major repairs are done in Battle Creek at the Community Motor Center's hub facility by a master mechanic, or contracted out at a reduced rate.

Because of a reduced hourly rate and donated and discounted parts, repair dollars available under ESS funds are stretched much further. Repairs and inspections are available to all Work First and FIA customers whether or not the vehicle is obtained through CMC. Inspections are provided at no cost.

There has been tremendous community response and participation in the new community collaborative. Other partners include Calhoun Area Technology Center, Bethany Christian Services, Michigan Heartland Goodwill Industries, Thornapple Motors II, Advance Auto Parts, Battle Creek Transmission, CarQuest, Choice Auto Parts and Insurance Network, all of Battle Creek, Discount Radiator of Kalamazoo, Winners Auto Repair, West Point Automotive, Larsen Construction, Caron Chevrolet Oldsmobile and Quality Independent Communications, Inc.



In Van Buren County, Sonja Mancha and Tiffanni Matos (right) share joy over Sonja's car.

# Parade of zero continues

Osceola and Shiawassee Project Zero sites most recent to achieve goal

Pair of counties are 88<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup> to reach benchmark

When the Osceola County Project Zero program reached “zero”

May 17—a day after the Shiawassee County program had reached the goal—it became the 89<sup>th</sup> of 102 sites to make it to the goal.

Zero is the designated point in time when all target Family Independence Program cases (FIP, formerly AFDC) in the county report earnings.

“We are very excited to join the other counties in Mid-Michigan that have reached zero,” said Osceola County Family Independence Agency director Stephen Smith. “We have been close for several months.”



**Stephen Smith**

Smith gave credit to his staff, their customers and Project Zero partners for the achievement. “Continued hard work from our project coordinator, Betty Meeker, and the commitment of our family independence manager, Linda VanHouten, and her staff were key to reaching our goal.

“Our success would not have happened without the strong support and teamwork we receive from (Big Rapids-based) Michigan Works! West Central and our partners at Human Resources Development Corporation.”

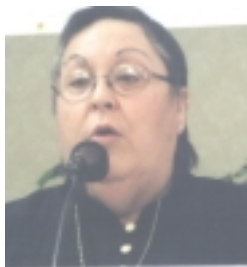
Project Zero began with six pilot sites in July 1996 and is operational at 102 sites in all counties. Osceola County joined Project Zero in October 2000. Shiawassee County became part of Project Zero in October 1999.

“Hitting zero means the world to our Shiawassee County team,” said Shiawassee County Family Independence Agency director Paula Clark. “Our staff, customers, community partners and communities all worked together to help us achieve this goal. We are proud and appreciate all of them.”

Flint-based Career Alliance Inc. is the Michigan Works! Agency serving Shiawassee County.

Project Zero is a cooperative effort involving state and local agencies, businesses and service providers. Local projects access state resources through formal agreements between state and local agencies.

“Congratulations to our local offices and their partners,” said state FIA director Douglas Howard. “Our partnership includes hard-working FIP customers and the local employers who hired them.”



**Paula Clark**



## FIA Icon

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Family Independence Agency*

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**Douglas E. Howard**, Director

Family Independence Agency

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## From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency



## Director arrested, handcuffed

**Taken away and sentenced to civic duty, bail set at \$1,000**

We interrupt this Director's Column with the sad news that Douglas Howard, director of the Family Independence Agency, was arrested and removed from his office at Family Independence Agency headquarters in Lansing May 17.

His transgression? Like a scene from Kafka, no one is sure. Dark and foreboding news was carried about the incident in an official notice from the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

"A warrant has been issued," said the notice. "Beware! The subject is armed with a big heart and is known to exhibit a severe propensity for helping others. If you are approached by this individual, you are urged to use extreme generosity."

As you may have figured out, Howard wasn't really arrested, even though the attached photo may lead you to believe otherwise. On a fine spring morning, MDA said he was taken away to do hard time raising funds at a local facility.

"The fugitive is trying to escape incarceration in the Muscular Dystrophy Association's **Maximum Appreciation Facility** and is seeking donations in an effort to raise the bail. The bail money will help meet the demand for funds necessary to support research and program services for the Muscular Dystrophy Association."

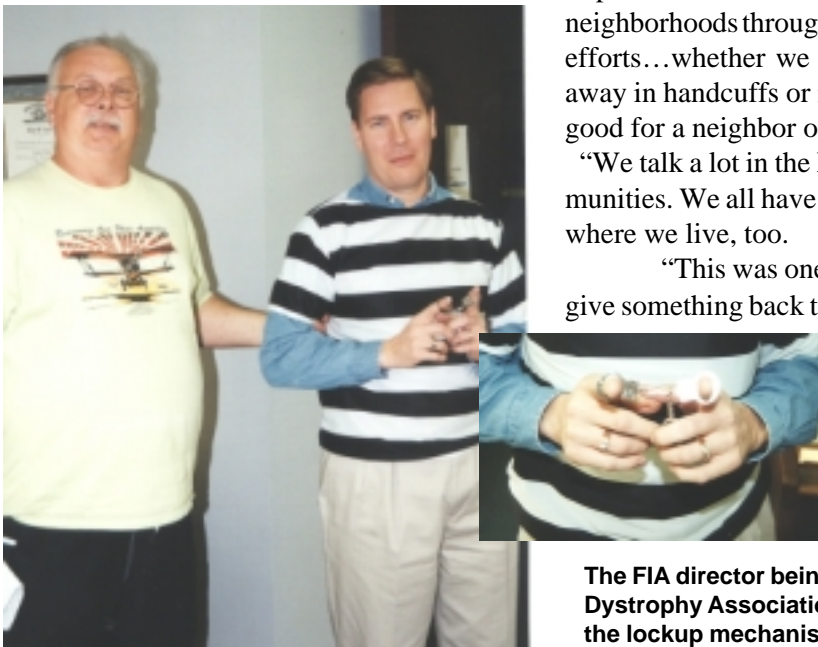
Howard was locked up at Lansing's Oldsmobile Heritage Center and was forced to stay until he raised \$1,000 in bail. "Luckily, the accused has been provided with advance notice to try to raise bail," said the MDA.

Funny stuff aside, Howard said participation in community activities is a necessary and important function of public officials.

"I was very pleased to participate in this fund-raising and fun effort," he said. "It's important that we contribute to the health of our neighborhoods through our voluntary efforts...whether we are arrested and taken away in handcuffs or if we just do something good for a neighbor or someone else."

"We talk a lot in the FIA about building communities. We all have the opportunity to do this where we live, too."

"This was one thing I could do to help give something back to my community."



The FIA director being led away by a Muscular Dystrophy Association jailer and a close-up of the lockup mechanism.

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# FIA employee wins statewide award

## Gretchen Wilbur awarded Greenleaf Award by Lansing-based homeless organization

By Bob Wyckoff  
FIA Office of Communications, Lansing  
Telephone (517) 373-7394



Gretchen Wilbur

LANSING—On May 1, Clare-Osceola County FIA volunteer coordinator Gretchen Wilbur received the Greenleaf Award for Homeless Advocacy and Awareness from the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness.

The Greenleaf Award, formerly known as the Gary Heidel Public Service Award, recognizes “one human service worker for high levels of compassionate and professional service and commitment to the problems of homelessness and lack of affordable housing.”

The award was presented to Wilbur during a luncheon ceremony at the coalition’s annual conference in Lansing. Participants included Victoria Morgan, the coalition’s Board of Directors chairperson, and Edward Kerr, executive director of the Clare County Enterprise Community (CCEC). The Enterprise Community board of directors nominated Wilbur for the award.

“I have said it many times, but I must say it again: without Gretchen’s leadership we would never have been able to make the progress on the Clare County continuum of care that was made,” said Kerr.

Wilbur served on the original steering committee that developed a countywide plan that led to the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s designation of Clare County as a rural enterprise community in 1998. The plan included: strategies or benchmarks for attracting industry and creating jobs; educating the work force; improving housing, health and social services; and promoting intergenerational activities.

Similar to an urban empowerment zone, enterprise community is a federal designation to spur economic growth and community development in depressed areas.

As a volunteer member of the CCEC board of directors, Wilbur championed a successful effort to produce the first continuum of care plan in Clare County to address homelessness issues.

From May-December 2000 she led the effort to organize a planning group of public and private partners (including consumers) to: develop a vision and process; map assets and deficiencies through surveys, polling and focus groups; establish a prioritization process; and develop long and short-term strategies.

The result was an effective plan that opened the doors to additional funding sources for the organization.

“Her tireless efforts to keep our goal in focus, and the rest of us on track, were the secrets of success,” said Kerr about her efforts.

Gretchen has been a strong advocate for families since 1978 as a services worker for the Oscoda County Department of Social Services. In 1979, she transferred to the Clare County DSS. In 1991, she became Clare County’s volunteer coordinator. In 1998, she assumed responsibility for volunteer services in both Clare and Osceola counties.

Clare-Osceola Family Independence Agency director Steve Smith said: “Gretchen continually plays a vital role in meeting the needs of the community by engaging groups, agencies, clubs and organizations effectively. She is a credit to our agency and the people she serves.”

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## Intercepted letters

**Date:** May 21, 2001  
**To:** Delta-Menominee FIA director Steve Lieburn  
**Subj:** Paula Ruleau

Attempts to adequately describe all Paula Ruleau does fail in two ways. First, it is difficult to put to paper all the tangible and intangible things Paula does. Second, having listed what Paula does begins to sound like fiction. I have found (great) compassion, enthusiasm (and) positive attitude with Paula Ruleau.

I would not be exaggerating to say that Paula has been instrumental in saving my life and helping me to get my feet back on the ground. Paula has made certain that I needed the life sustaining medical treatment I required. She has helped me to get into my own apartment. With Paula's help, I was able to acquire modest furnishing and utensils with which to live. And when I was not able to eat solid foods, Paula helped to locate liquid products that would nourish me until I was able to eat.

With every roadblock, every impasse I would meet, Paula would cheerfully help me to find another solution. On numerous occasions Paula has gone well above and beyond what anyone could have expected of someone in her position. I find Paula to be compassionate, cheerful, professional, encouraging and a good listener.

I am sure you are well aware of how "huge" the world of social services can appear to someone that has worked their entire life and has had no exposure to the "system". Without Paula, I would have remained lost, searching for help, but knowing not where to turn. Paula truly is, in every sense of the word, a "lifesaver" and must indeed be a huge asset to your organization.

**Russell T. Roy**  
**Escanaba**

*Note:* Paula Ruleau is an eligibility specialist with Delta County Family Independence Agency.

**Date:** April 26, 2001  
**To:** Alcona-Iosco County FIA director Bill Denemy  
**Subj:** Child Development and Care

I wanted to write to express my appreciation for the "Parent Pages Newsletter" I have been receiving. It's short enough that I can sit down and read it all the way through. It is obvious that those who are responsible are thoughtful in what they include and the pictures, although in black and white, are very engaging. My favorite items are those directing me to books I can enjoy with my children or that help me with my parenting. Please forward this on to those responsible for this publication. It is a pleasant addition to our family.



**Sandra Southwick and kids, Daniel & Evelyn Bowman**

**Sandra Southwick**  
**Oscoda**

*Note:* Parent Pages Newsletter is published quarterly by the FIA Child Development and Care Division and circulated without cost to child day care customers.



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**Date:** April 23, 2001  
**To:** Karen Byron  
**Subj:** Contract Training

We would like to thank you for the excellent training you provided to DDS staff April 19. Feedback we have received has been exceptionally positive. Staff has noted how well you organized and presented complex information. They found your message clear and were impressed with your ability to provide serious information in a pleasant and cheerful manner. The use of prepared, color-coded materials in conjunction with your Power Point presentation aided staff. Even more significant was your willingness to tailor the training to DDS staff needs and use DDS examples. Such concern represents the ultimate in customer service and sets a standard we encourage DDS staff to emulate. The overview you provided helped sensitize DDS staff to the world of contracting. Several commented that they never realized the range of issues and concerns that bear on contracting or how interrelated are the concerns of Civil Service, Department of Management and Budget and FIA. Or how many points at which the process can bog down without adequate preparation and attention to detail. It was a very productive session and you deserve great credit for delivering such well-prepared and well-executed training.

**Linda Dorn and Dave Ludington**  
**Michigan Disability Determination Service, Lansing**

*Note:* Karen Byron works in the FIA Contracts and Rate Setting Unit in Lansing.

**Date:** April 13, 2001  
**To:** Jayne Wagner  
**Subj:** Transitions

Hi! So many things have changed since I last wrote you. My parents sent us the money to take a trip up to Alaska to visit them and for Jack to see what it was like and if there were any job prospects for him. We have decided to stay here in Alaska. Could you please cancel my Medicaid?

Right now both IreLynn and Rhyon have bad colds. Rhyon has had three bouts of croup since the last week of February. Jack has already found a wonderful job here in Alaska working at a tree service and making \$15 an hour. Once he takes the journeyman test, the first opening at his job for a union worker will go to him and it starts at \$28 an hour.

Brittany came with us but little Jackie and the twins stayed in Michigan, which we are really sad about. Jack has considered not staying with the tree service because at the end of this year a new jail will be finished in Anchorage here and they will be hiring for corrections officers. He has all the qualifications. He has not decided since the benefits of working for the city might outweigh working for the tree service. What a variety of choices for him! He acts like a kid in a candy shop. It has made me laugh more than once in the few weeks we have been here.

I will write later and fill you in on the rest of the details and maybe if you don't mind I could send you one or two pictures? I want to thank you for everything you ever did for us. I miss Michigan terribly. This was a very difficult choice for us but the opportunity here was something we could not turn down right now. Our whole goal has always been for me to be able to finish school so I can get a good job and for him to find good work and not have to have state help at all, while providing a good life for our children. We believe this move will allow us to do this after a time. Thanks again for everything. We could never have come this far without some one like you who actually cared if we made it or not.

**April M. McKendry**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**

*Note:* The author had a family case with Jayne Wagner, a family independence specialist for the Otsego County Family Independence Agency.

# Iron County woman is the 90<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month

## Mom of two left assistance for career in nursing

By Jaci LaRoux, Project Zero Coordinator  
Iron County Family Independence Agency  
Telephone (906) 265-0305

IRON RIVER—Chaunce Roe, an Iron County mother of two, was honored as Achiever of the Month during a May 18 ceremony.



Chaunce Roe receives the Achiever of the Month plaque from Family Independence Agency director Douglas Howard. Photo courtesy The Daily News, Iron Mountain

FIA director Douglas E. Howard presented the award at the Iron River Country Club. Howard commended Chaunce for remarkable progress she made toward economic independence and self-improvement.

### Asking for help

A Stambaugh resident, Chaunce (pronounced chon-SAY) turned to the Family Independence Agency in April 1995. At that time, she was pregnant with her second child and was having difficulty making ends meet. Through the Iron County FIA, Chaunce and her family were able to receive FIP, Medicaid, child day care and food stamps. Despite high unemployment Chaunce found a job working part-time. Although pleased to have employment, she wanted to provide more for her family. Chaunce has always been interested in the medical field and her lifelong dream was to become a nurse.

### A burning desire

In 1993 Chaunce had already earned some college credits at Bay De Noc Community College in Escanaba, but illness forced her to drop out of the licensed practical nursing program. She completed course work in 1994 and earned an associate's degree in liberal arts. Chaunce needed money for college, day care for her children and reliable transportation. She received a Pell grant to assist with her education expenses in addition to the support she received from a JTPA program Work First helped her enter. "I was tired of saving all of my check stubs, utility bills, and being embarrassed by being on public assistance," she said. "I wanted a better life for myself and my family."

### Facing challenges

At that time, Chaunce was working part-time at McDonald's in Iron River while attending college 90 miles away in Escanaba. McDonald's played a major role in supporting Chaunce's desire to complete her college degree. They worked around her class schedule, enabling her to continue working part-time. Chaunce's co-worker, Sara Kirkpatrick, said: "We'd pass each other on the way to work at 4 a. m., me on my way to McDonald's and Chaunce at the gas station filling up to drive to Escanaba." It wasn't unusual for Chaunce to leave at 3:30 a. m. for the commute to Escanaba.

In 1997, Chaunce began reconsidering her goals and once again thought about enrolling in the L. P. N. program. With encouragement from her mother, family and her family independence specialist, Sharon Everson, she enrolled in 1998. Chaunce later worked full-time at the Northwoods Medical Center in Phelps, Wis. Her cash assistance case closed due to earnings in July 1999.

### Finding success

In August 2000, Chaunce received her licensed practical nursing degree. In November she passed the Michigan State Nursing Licensing Board test and received her practical nursing license.

Chaunce now works full-time at the Iron County Medical Care Facility in Crystal Falls. Chaunce's hard work and determination to provide a better future for her family makes her a shining example of success in Iron County.

# FIA employees receive private agency awards

## Child and Family Services awards Humanitarian, Testimonial Awards to FIA employees

By Deborah Porter, Program Manager & Services Specialist  
FIA Zone 2 Office, Traverse City  
Telephone (231) 922-5240

A pair of FIA employees in Zone 2 were honored at a recent private agency award ceremony.

**Roger Quinn**, a 35-year FIA employee who established the Northern Michigan Adoption Program 19 years ago, received the Humanitarian Award at the Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan's annual recognition banquet April 30. CFS of Northwestern Michigan is a private, nonprofit agency that provides purchase of service foster care and adoption services to the counties in northwest lower Michigan.

The agency presents the award annually to an "individual who makes the welfare of children their number one priority, whose dedication extends beyond the expectations of their position, and whose style and approach help facilitate the work of our professional staff."

Past recipients of the Humanitarian Award have included former Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld, probate court judges, educators, health care professionals and child advocates from the public sector.

The annual awards and recognition event was held at the Water Front Inn Conference Center in Traverse City. Jim Scherrer, deputy director for Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan, presented the award to Roger.

Roger commented on the award, saying: "My Reaction? Deeply grateful and surprised to the point that when advised by Jim Scherrer of my selection, I thought he was kidding (and) must have the wrong Roger Quinn."

Roger went on to say: "I am awed and truly humbled. I am very proud and extend a big thank you to my adoption staff, most of whom are here tonight."

Roger's family, the Northern Michigan Adoption staff, Zone 2 manager Charles Bryant and Deb Porter were present for Roger's presentation.

Roger was an adopted child himself bringing a deep personal commitment to adoption needs and is highly valued by everyone who comes into contact with him.

CFS of Northwestern Michigan also presented their "Testimonial Award" to an adoptive family headed by **Sue and Bruce Yemmans**. They were recognized for their willingness to adopt and commit to two special needs older children providing them with a permanent family.

The adoptive father, Bruce, is an employee at the Leelanau County Family Independence Agency and Sue is a home health care worker. They give a new meaning to taking your work home with you!

In addition to their adoptive children, Bruce and Sue have two other children, 20-year-old Clint and 17-year-old Nicole.

Bruce and Sue adopted 11-year-old Blake through Northwest Child and Family Services in October 1998, then began pre-adoption foster care on five-year-old Tevin in October 2000. Tevin's adoption was expected to be final in June.

Bruce offered his thanks to the FIA staff in Leelanau County for their support and coverage during absences necessitated by special needs adoptive children.

There were several awards given that evening, but the Humanitarian and Testimonial awards both received standing ovations and moved the crowd on an emotional level that is difficult to convey in written replay. Congratulations from the Zone 2 Office staff to our outstanding award-winning employees!



The Yemmans family (from left): Bruce, Tevin, Sue, Blake and Nicole (Clint not pictured).



# Equipment problem No.1 solved, now for No. 2

## New printers rolled out to local offices in 2001

By Judy Odett, Desktop Printing Specialist

FIA Information Technology Management Services, End User Computing, Lansing

Telephone (517) 241-7224

At a recent statewide director's meeting, when the discussion shifted to talks of the successfully completed year 2000 workstation rollout project, one director posed the question: "Now that you fixed our number one problem (meaning slow workstations), when are you going to fix our number two problem...printing."

The complaints ranged from printer down time, lost productivity due to time intensive manual sorting of printed output, reprinting due to "ransom note" printing, and lost print jobs.

"Ransom note" is a phrase, widely used in local offices, that describes a common problem printing

Word documents since offices were migrated to the Windows NT operating system. Certain characters throughout the document were randomly enlarged, italicized and/or bolded, giving the document the appearance of a ransom note, as if comprised of cutout letters.

Well, the time is here to fix problem number two. As part of a 2001 equipment rollout, the Family Independence Agency will be deploying over 1,500 new printers to local offices to replace the older printer technology that has been in service for more than five years.

### More work, less time

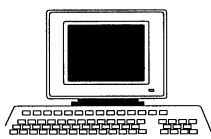
A project led by ITMS End User Computing, the new printer rollout began June 4. Project completion is scheduled by Aug. 17.

The new high-speed laser printers are part of Lexmark's Optra T family of printers. The FIA is purchasing the Optra T616 model printer, which features an output speed of 35 pages-per-minute, faster time to first page, two 500 sheet input trays, 16mb of memory, an in-built network card, uses the latest print driver technology, and is being equipped with automatic sort bins.

The new FIA printing policy is to have each FIA workstation assigned to a sort bin on one of the new high-speed printers, similar to having a printing mailbox. Automatic sorting the bins provide is intended to decrease productivity loss due to manual sorting of printed output. In addition, the new print driver technology has eliminated the "ransom note" printing problem that in the past forced many jobs to be reprinted.



**Prevention worker Eric Scott points out the technology upgrade at Gratiot County. The Lexmark T616 printer will be installed in all FIA local offices during the 2001 equipment rollout project.**



**INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES**

*Chief Information Officer*

### Tested, tried, true

Gratiot County was selected by FIA Outstate Operations to pilot the new printers. Gratiot County FIA director Donna O'Grady and her staff graciously stepped up to the challenge of being the pilot office. The pilot started April 25 in a reserved fashion with the installation of one printer. The new printer was such a big hit that the Gratiot office agreed to have the remaining new printers installed the next day. All of Gratiot's staff were migrated to the new printers and completed their month end work, which typically equates to a heavier workload, using the new T616 printers.

During a follow-up meeting at Gratiot County, with all staff in attendance, when asked how they liked the new printer the response was an overwhelming "We love it!" Staff said they like the audible beeps the printer makes when there is low paper or paper jam, as well as the status message on the front panel of the printer.

The productivity gain that the printers have provided has been astonishing. Gratiot County reported most staff have experienced a 40-72 minute time savings per day by making less frequent trips to the printer and by not having to manually sort through printed output in search of their print jobs.

There has also been a time saving benefit associated with eliminating the need to reprint work because it was mistakenly picked up by another worker or needed reprints because of the "ransom note" printing problem.

### An unanticipated gain

The only negative comment, made by one worker in jest, is the new printers ruin social time together. Workers who used to gather in front of the printer while jobs were sorted now walk to the printer and their output is waiting for them in their own personal sort bin.

Many thanks go to the staff in FIA that participated in preparation for the 2001 rollout, especially staff in Application System Development and Offices Services divisions who lent their support in testing FIA's applications and electronic forms and templates on the new printers. Also thanks go to Gratiot County for paving the way for the printer rollout.

The new printer rollout was an added bonus in FIA's upgrade of its technology infrastructure, which in turn will provide FIA staff with the current tools necessary to best serve customers for years to come.



**Family independence specialist Jill Barnes retrieves printouts from a person sort bin on the T616 printer. Pictures were taken during Gratiot County's "Casual for Santa's Cause" casual day fundraiser.**

# Fundraisers save pet as owner deteriorates

## Alpena County FIA staff and community contribute to good end

By Betty Jean Brown, Adult Services Worker  
Alpena County Family Independence Agency, Alpena  
Telephone (989) 354-7262

ALPENa—Alpena County FIA is an agency with a big heart.

The staff is notorious for putting together numerous fundraisers for all kinds of causes. In this last year, one of the causes that Alpena County supported was the most creative and heart-warming fundraiser yet.

Rolene Berg, an adult protective services worker in Alpena, had a client that deteriorated both physically and mentally. Due to her illness, the client was no longer able to work, had no income, and was being evicted from her rental home. Upon investigation, this client required immediate hospitalization. After the hospitalization, the client needed several months of residential treatment.

The dilemma was that this client had a little dog that was her life. This dog was really her only family, she was hospitalized, he was now homeless, and it was apparent that her recovery would be impacted by the fate of her best friend.

It is a well-known fact that Rolene will not only go the distance for her clients, but is also an intense animal advocate. Realizing the importance of this client's dog to be sheltered and cared for, Rolene immediately began making arrangements to save this little dog.

At the onset, Rolene was able to convince a volunteer to take the dog and keep it temporarily while Rolene contributed dog food. But the volunteer was not able to maintain this care long term. The dog also needed of veterinary care; Rolene and this volunteer paid for it.

Rolene was able to find a kennel that was quite reasonable, but even with a reasonable rate funds were needed to pay for the kennel. The projected amount needed was about \$500.

Rolene rallied her co-workers and the first to step up was her program manager, Doug McCombs. Doug helped her pay for the first week of the dog's care. After that, the remaining Adult Services staff, various staff from other units and volunteers also stepped in and put together projects to make the funding needed.

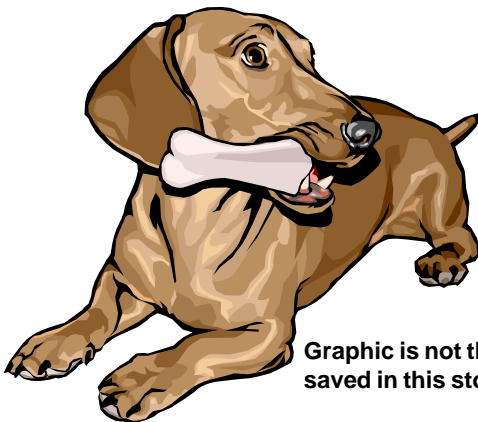
The Alpena FIA hosted luncheons and Jeans for Charity Days—events where employees pay to wear jeans on a certain day and the funds go to a charity—donated funds from home-made cookie sales, and staff gave monetary donations.

With all these efforts, Alpena County FIA was able to keep the dog in a kennel and preserve its life. And Rolene was constantly able to reassure her client that she would be reunited with her dog once she was well again.

Alpena County FIA accomplished their funding goal, saved the dog, and through many coordinating efforts this young woman and her dog are once again reunited and living in their own apartment together.



**Rolene Berg and friends**



**Graphic is not the animal saved in this story**

# Clare County acknowledges volunteer contributions at recognition event

## Luncheon includes awards, thanks and poetry dedicated to volunteers

By Kathy Gutting, Secretary

Clare County Family Independence Agency, Harrison

Telephone (989) 539-4245

HARRISON—Clare County FIA held a Volunteer Recognition Luncheon at the Surrey House in Harrison April 25. There were 78 volunteers and FIA staff members in attendance.

Gretchen Wilbur, Clare County FIA volunteer coordinator, conducted the program called "Volunteering – Expands Your Horizons." During the program she presented certificates of appreciation to about 50 persons who volunteered their time and/or services for the last 12 years.

Clare County staff members were recognized for their generous support for volunteer programs and fundraising efforts throughout the year. One day each month, staffers are allowed to wear jeans for a \$2 donation. These funds are turned over to volunteer programs.

Also throughout the year, staff purchase snacks from a candy box sponsored by the volunteer services. The proceeds go to Project Kids Christmas.

At one point during the program, Gretchen introduced Kathie Chimner, prevention and foster care specialist for Clare County FIA. Kathie read a poem she penned titled, "Call a Volunteer!"

Clare County FIA shares the poem as it probably fits most volunteers in most county FIA offices. It is a way for all of us to say, "Thank you volunteers and staff!"

### Call A Volunteer!

*By Kathie Chimner*

If you've got to go to Midland for some X-rays and exams,  
If your car has no transmission, and you're really in a jam,  
If you have to see your worker at exactly 9 a.m.—

*Call a Volunteer!*

If you need a form completed, and you can't quite see to do it,  
If you have a stove to give, and you need someone to move it,  
If you need a helping hand, who will surely get right to it—

*Call a Volunteer!*

If you have to do your taxes, and it all looks "Greek to me",  
If your paperwork is jumbled, and you're stressed as you can be,  
If you wouldn't know a 1040 if it bit you on the knee—

*Call a Volunteer!*

If you need 500 fliers mailed off to everywhere,  
If you need 19 transporters sent correctly here and there,  
If you need that ringing phone picked up by someone with some flair—

*Call a Volunteer!*

If you're running a café, and serving ham or fishes,  
And you're helping lots of folks to work toward their wishes,  
If you're serving quite a crowd and have lots and LOTS of dishes—

*Call a Volunteer!*

If some kids need Christmas presents and their parents,  
Christmas joy,  
If some presents need some wrapping for some little girls and boys,

If a Santa suit needs filling, and some elves to pass out toys—

*Call a Volunteer!*

If you're looking for a cheerful face and pleasant, loving smile,  
For energy, efficiency, for caring, spunk, and style,  
For a person who gives all he has, who goes the extra mile—

As any of us who have seen the Clare County Volunteers in Action  
can tell you—

*Call a Volunteer!*



# Intranet redesign a success thanks to input from FIA employees

## Other net improvements down the road

By Carol Webber, FIA Internet Team

FIA Information Technology Management Services, Lansing

Telephone (517) 335-7722

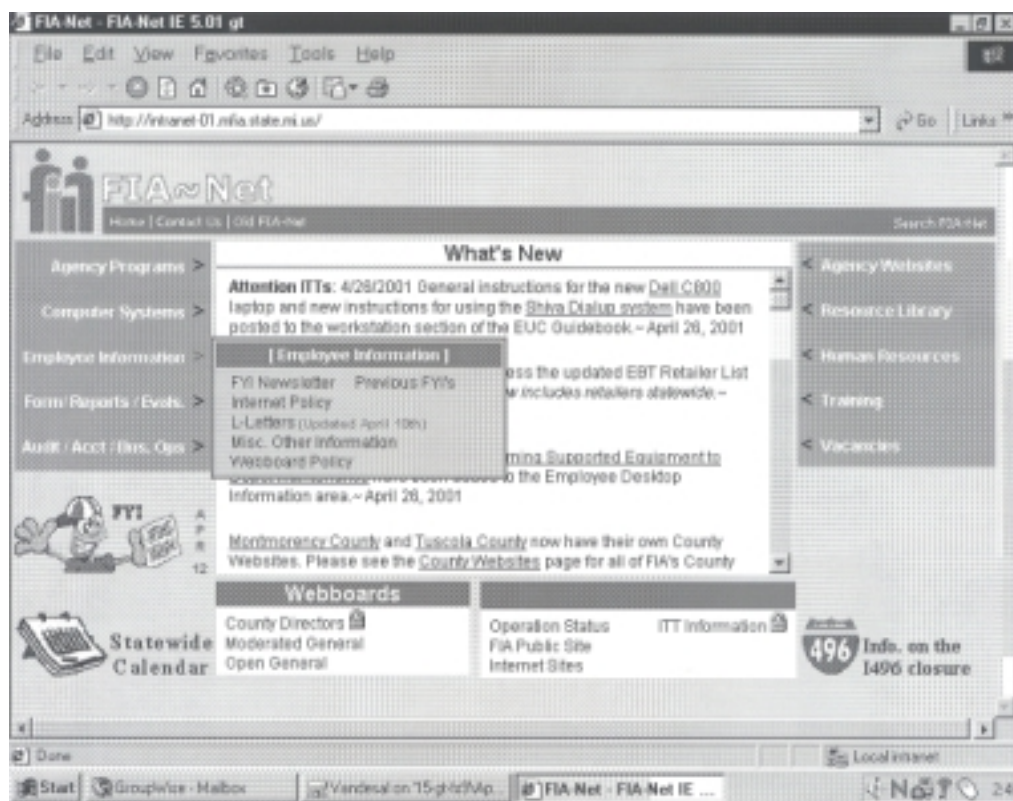
The FIA Internet Team would like to thank all staff who contributed to the redesign of the FIA-Net. Your comments and suggestions helped tremendously. The redesign was to make FIA-Net a more useful tool and to give it a facelift. Without your input, that would not have been possible.

The process was a huge undertaking in a short time frame. The first step was to identify and reach our customers—FIA staff throughout the state. We solicited suggestions and design ideas from the FIA-Net population via the webboards and received a huge response. We also attended meetings with representation from around the state.

The second step was to decide on a content theme and design. The biggest problem reported by employees was all staff could not find things easily or intuitively. We decided to amend the FIA-Net to a content-grouping design. We also wanted to move more information near the home page and not have it buried 12 clicks deep in an agency site. Almost every suggestion and comment we received on these issues was implemented.

The new FIA-Net went “live” April 2. The positive response was tremendous. We are still receiving e-mails with suggestions from users through the “Contact Us” button at the top of the home page. The response helped us correct oversights and improve usability. The FIA-Net is not static – it is a design that will be continually changing.

The Internet Team and ITMS management are reviewing future design concepts. The FIA public website will be redesigned at a future date, sometime after e-Michigan standards have been finalized. The goal will continue to be ease of use and increased options for users. Farther down the road is “MyFIA-Net”, an option that will allow FIA employees to customize their own FIA-Net home page and select various components from a pre-designed list.



# Disability Determination Service brings home national awards

## Staff and programs win awards for innovation, service

By Linda Dorn, Director

Michigan Disability Determination Service, Lansing

Telephone (517) 373-4533

CHANDLER, Ariz.—At a May 9 national meeting in this Phoenix suburb, the Social Security Administration presented awards for outstanding achievements.

Acting Social Security Commissioner Larry Masanari addressed winners and acknowledged their important public service, professional commitment and accomplishments. The Michigan DDS returned home with awards in three national recognition categories.

The DDS makes medical decisions on behalf of the Social Security Administration to qualify persons for SSI and SSDI. In Michigan, DDS is administered through the FIA with area offices in Lansing, Detroit, Kalamazoo and Traverse City.

Michigan is one of 10 states that received national recognition for dedication carrying out the prototype process. As a “prototype” state, Michigan enhanced services by making case management improvements, enhancing the role of disability examiners and medical consultants, and offering pre-determination conferences for customers.

Michigan’s DDS staff were recognized for collaboration to overcome challenges in making the transition to the new process. Three examiners—Joan Richardson of Traverse City, Robin Davis from Kalamazoo and Olan Barnes from Detroit—accepted the award on behalf of all staff.

The DDS input and case processing units received national recognition for outstanding leadership, performance, service and professionalism. Three of our staff members—Alaina Aleman from Lansing, Cheryl Lassiter from Detroit and Linda Stoeffler of Kalamazoo—received awards of behalf of their coworkers in the respective offices.

Susan Heckendorn, examiner from Traverse City, and Cassandra Collier, manager from Detroit, participated in a national assignment working collaboratively with the National Process Refinement Team. They received Associate Commissioner Citations for outstanding performance as a group recommending refinements to the disability policy and procedures. The goal of this national group was to achieve efficiencies without adversely affecting the quality of customer service.

Among DDS staff getting awards (right, from left): Linda Dorn, Cassandra Collier and Susan Heckendorn.

Below from left: Cheryl Lassiter, Alaina Aleman and Linda Stoeffler. Also in the photo are acting Social Security Commissioner Larry Masanari (left) and Ken Nibali, associate commissioner.



# Building toward the future

## Habitat for Humanity ready to build its first house inside Traverse City limits FIA collaboration with Habitat for Humanity another first in community

[www.traversecityrecordeagle.com](http://www.traversecityrecordeagle.com)

■ This story was published in the Record-Eagle May 5 online version. FIA icon added to the story.

TRAVERSE CITY—For the first time within these city limits, a Habitat for Humanity home will be built for a local family in need.

The three-bedroom, one-bath, 1,050-square-foot home will be built on one of 10 lots purchased by Rotary Camps and Services, Inc. from the city with the intention of providing lots for affordable housing.

### A second “first”

Another “first” for the project is the involvement of the Grand Traverse County Family

Independence Agency. The project may be the first such collaboration between the FIA and Habitat in the state.

“We recognize affordable housing is often the biggest barrier for some people. Habitat is one of the resources that builds that affordable home,” said Sue Schwartz, program manager for the Grand Traverse County FIA. “We would like to challenge other FIA offices in the state to do the same thing. If each of us did, that would be more communities with (affordable) homes.” Schwartz said building the home is a goal of Grand Traverse FIA Project Zero and Volunteer Services Strategic Plan for 2001

### Project Zero contribution

“We discussed using funding from our Project Zero plan with FIA administrators. Those funds will be appropriately applied in this project,” Schwartz said. “The FIA is not in the business to build houses, but we are serving our community through employee commitment, customer focus, innovation and effective partnerships to remove barriers. Our investment in this project is not in bricks and mortar but serving in other ways.” Schwartz said FIA employees and partners will volunteer time and effort and develop relationships that serve the partners and community.

“The local office and our partners must raise about \$60,000 in cash or in-kind donations to complete this project. The Project Zero and volunteer services portion will be part of this. The labor and all else will be as a result of the love and labor of the partners.”

### Groundbreaking held in May

“We had the ground-breaking ceremony May 6,” Schwartz said. “There was good attendance and it was a very heart-warming event. We are partnering with Traverse City Fire & Police departments and Freedom Ministries to construct the home.”

Governor John Engler sent a letter that was read at the ceremony. “The construction of a home is a prime example of what can be accomplished when people work together to better their community,” it said. “I commend the Grand Traverse Family Independence Agency, the Traverse City Police and Fire Departments and Freedom Ministries, as well as all the others whose hard work and dedication helped make today a possibility.”

(continued)



At the groundbreaking ceremony (from left:) Homeowner Lana Hockett; Robert Porter, director, and other members of the Grand Traverse FIA staff: Annette Smith, Cynthia Crocket, Sue Schwartz, Jalene Moore, Anthony Ryan, Colleen Ryan, Nancy McCloskey, Eileen Asam, Rachel Richards and Roxanne Vanderveer.



Habitat for Humanity had known of affordable housing problems in Traverse City.

“We have known for years that families have requested to move into the city limits so they can ride their bikes and walk to work,” Robin Grubbs, Habitat for Humanity executive director, said. “Partnering with the FIA is opening another door for finding homes for people we have on our waiting lists.”

When finished, a Traverse City woman and her three children will use an interest-free mortgage to purchase the home, Grubbs said. The woman, like all Habitat families, will contribute “sweat equity” in the construction of the home.

■ For more information contact Cindy Crocket, Project Zero coordinator, at (231) 929-2514 or Sue Schwartz at (231) 929-2517.

## **We fly together or we don't fly**

### **Manager's philosophy turns into awards at Fullerton-Jeffries District**

**By Esther McDaniel, Family Independence Manager**

**Wayne County FIA Fullerton District Office**

**Telephone (313) 934-4488**

DETROIT—Josh Mack, district manager at the Fullerton-Jeffries District Office, has a philosophy, “We fly together or we don't fly”, that instills the spirit of teamwork in the district office.

To exemplify this philosophy, Mack rewards teamwork efforts through an annual awards recognition program.

Employee recognition has been an important component throughout Mack's career in FIA. Mack established the program when he came to the Fullerton-Jeffries office in 1998.

The goal of this program is to recognize the accomplishments of employees for meeting and exceeding the Family Independence Agency vision, mission and values. Fullerton-Jeffries employees are recognized for excellence in a broad variety of award categories including excellence in professionalism, team spirit, community outreach, standard of promptness, customer self-sufficiency and so much more.

“The Fullerton-Jeffries award recognition program is a best practice example of employee recognition excellence,” said Julie Horn Alexander, FIA Office of Reengineering & Quality Management.

“It is a program that creatively recognizes the accomplishments of employees which then increases the morale of employees and contributes to quality customer service and helps retain high quality employees.

“We also appreciate the significant contributions Josh Mack makes as a member of the FIA Teaming for Excellence Steering Team.”

A committee representative of district office employees coordinates this recognition program. The committee meets regularly throughout the year and submits recommendations for award categories and parameters for employee recognition.

On March 30, the third annual awards program and luncheon was held at the Fullerton office in Detroit. FIA staff attending the awards program included: Stan Parker, Office of Reengineering and Quality Management; Clarence Willis, Jr., deputy director of Wayne County FIA; staff from Work First agencies; school and business representatives, Community Advisory Board members; FIA Zone manager Read Johnson; and Al Ward, director of Dexter-Elmhurst Community Center.

Each year the program includes entertainment. This year Carmen Carpenter, advisory board vice president, performed a Tina Turner revue. Detroit Mackenzie High School's ROTC provided the color guard. A friend of the advisory board, 76 year-old Leona Hobbs Sutton, sang one selection in spite of a sore throat.

■ For more information on the program or individual winners contact Josh Mack at (313) 934-7202. Contact the author for information on the committee or recognition day.



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# Child care dollars help update Children's Corner

## New colors, images greet children spending time at Lapeer County FIA office

LAPEER, Mich.—“Imagine a castle from a time reborn, a soldier with a silver horn, a sunrise over emerald hills, an ocean filled with lots of thrills, a tree for the birds to land and boats that were built by man.

“Imagine a child on her way to school, who’s searching for the golden rule. She’s dreaming of the olden days when dinosaurs roamed the hills and played. “Imagine a room for kids to play and dream their little cares away.”

These are the words of Bernard Kaiser, Green Thumb employee assigned to the Lapeer County Family Independence Agency, to describe the Children’s Corner, a room located off our lobby at the FIA office in Lapeer.

Kaiser’s artwork, displayed here, now adorns the room.

“Children’s Corner is manned by volunteers to watch children for parents while they are being interviewed or attending orientation sessions,” said Pat Bellinger, Lapeer County Family Independence Agency director.

When Linda Barber, Lapeer County FIA volunteer services manager, learned of Bernard’s artistic talents, she asked him to make some sketches for how he would enhance the corner. After the sketches were completed, we knew we had the right person to paint murals on the walls of the corner.

Bernard used the walls of the room as his canvas. One of the walls incorporates the actual concrete blocks as part of a castle

His attention to detail is evident in his finished work. Most of the artwork took three coats of paint before he was satisfied with the colors and the three dimensional effect of his work.

The grant funding the project provided for the purchase of some new furniture for the corner. Child Care and Development funds provided the paint and supplies Bernard used to paint the corner.

“Funding for this project was from Child Care and Development Funds,” said Bellinger. “L-00-198 (an FIA online message) announced each local office had \$2,500 to spend to update these areas.”

The corner has met with rave reviews from children. Bernard recently completed a special poster for foster care recruitment. Next on his list will be a special mural in the children’s visitation room.

For more information contact Linda Barber at (810) 667-0819.



# Osceola County woman is 89<sup>th</sup> Achiever of Month

By Betty Meeker, Project Zero Coordinator  
Osceola County Family Independence Agency,  
Reed City  
Telephone (231) 832-4129



Carol Koon (center) with her boss, Cheryl DeBano (left) and Joyce Lund of Hope Network, which provided Carol's 911 training.

REED CITY—Family, friends, FIA staff members and special guests gathered at the Osceola County Family Independence Agency April 19 to honor Carol Koon as the 89<sup>th</sup> recipient of the Achiever of the Month award. FIA director Douglas Howard, who was among many on hand at the ceremony, presented the award.

Carol Koon made lemonade out of lemons. Carol is married to Raymond (usually called Tim) and they have four children: Lynn, age 15; Erica, age 12; Joseph, age 11; and Alyssa, age 9.

## A history of self-support

In July 1999 Tim was laid off from his job as an auto body repairman. Carol was working full-time at Foster's Market in Evart but her wages were not enough to support the family. Meanwhile, they discovered it would take six to eight weeks for Tim's unemployment compensation benefits to begin.

Although they were having a difficult time making ends meet, Carol was hesitant to come to the Family Independence Agency. Carol and Tim have always worked hard to provide for their family. "I think nobody wants to say they need a hand out, and I knew that is what it was," she said. "But we could not make ends meet and I did not know what else to do."

Through the Osceola County FIA, the Koon family received FIP, food stamps and Medicaid. In addition to these benefits, FIA helped with car repairs to enable Carol to continue her job at Foster's Market.

Through Work First contractor Hope Network, Carol learned of the training for 911 operators. Hope Network enrolled her, paid her training fees and purchased the clothing she needed for the program. During the four-week training program, Carol continued working full-time at Foster's Super Market. "She successfully completed the training program and was hired by Lake County as a 911 dispatcher," said Howard during his address. "And all this while holding down a 40-hour-a-week job."

## Enjoying the newest challenge

Carol's supervisor, Cheryl DeBano, is director of Lake County Central Dispatch. "She came to us in December 1999," said DeBano. "It was a privilege to work with Carol because she is so sensitive to her callers. She receives regular compliments from her coworkers. "She has supervised more telephone CPRs than any of our other dispatchers. She is genuine and wants to help those who call. Carol is one of our heroes."

Carol enjoyed her 911 training, the beginning of her important career change. "The Work First program gives the opportunity to change a life," she said. "People are committed to success for clients.

"I am very thankful and honored to be picked for this award. My family deserves credit and a wonderful thank you for putting up with so much. "Thank you for taking the chance on me. Without people who believed in me, I would not be here today."

■ Established in 1993, the Achiever of the Month program honors an FIA customer who has persevered in efforts to become independent of public assistance. For more information see the FIA website: [www.mfia.state.mi.us](http://www.mfia.state.mi.us)

# Moms for Mom's

## County FIA workers say thanks to customers who are moms

By Sharon Christensen, Director  
Mecosta County Family Independence Agency, Big Rapids  
Telephone (231) 796-4347

BIG RAPIDS—Mecosta County Family Independence Agency employees held fundraisers and sought donations from the community to remember moms on Mother's Day, May 13.

The "Moms for Mom's" committee coordinated casual days events, raffles and spoke to community groups to raise funds for the project. A total of \$2,400 was raised to purchase Big Kmart gift cards valued at \$10 each. Committee members sent gift cards along with a Mother's Day card—designed by project creator Margaret Morrow—to all moms with active cases with the Mecosta County FIA.



**Mecosta County FIA Moms for Mom's committee members (from left): Trish McHugh, Tonya Park, Linda Westgate, Pattie Chadra, Fay Randall, Margaret Morrow (hiding), Nancy Lentz and Kathy Groff.**



Within a day of the mailing, tearful "thank you" calls and notes began to roll in. Fay Randall, a committee member and administrative support staff person, took the first call. Both Fay and the caller ended in tears!

"I've never been so touched in all my life," said the mom who called. "What a thoughtful, caring group of people."

"Thank you so much for the gift certificate," said another mom in a note. "I surely appreciate the help we have gotten from the agency."

"Please thank everyone," said a letter from a mom. "As a mom you know it requires a lot of patience to raise a child. But with a handicap...I hope I can say I did it right."

**Left: A replica of the Mother's Day greeting sent to Mecosta County's mothers.**



# New tools aim to bridge communication gap

## Deaf communication cards and police training video introduced

DIMONDALE, Mich.—At a May 15 event, Lieutenant Governor Dick Posthumus announced new deaf awareness training videos will be distributed to law enforcement agencies. In addition, deaf and hard of hearing persons can acquire new “visor” and wallet cards at Secretary of State offices throughout Michigan. The cards will help them communicate with police.

The tools are part of an ongoing statewide initiative to strengthen communication between police and people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“Our goal with this program has been to further strengthen communication between the deaf community and law enforcement,” Posthumus said.

Colonel Michael Robinson, director of Michigan State Police, Chris Hunter from Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns (MCDC) Division on Deafness, and representatives from participating police organizations participated in the event, which was held at the State Police Training Academy near Lansing.

The statewide training initiative has been endorsed by all major law enforcement associations including the Michigan Sheriffs

Association, Michigan State Police, Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police. Other partners in the program include the Governor’s Office, Michigan Department of Community Health, Secretary of State, Deaf Community Awareness Network and the MCDC, a unit of the Family Independence Agency.

The new training video instructs police on how to communicate with a deaf or hard of hearing person and shows proper use of the visor card. If pulled over by police while driving, a deaf or hard of hearing person will point to his or her ear, shake his or her head no, then pull down the visor and show the card that reads, “I Am Deaf or Hard of Hearing”. On the backside, the card offers instruction for police to communicate with a deaf or hard of hearing person.



Pictured above and left: a video clip of the new police training video played during the event and replicas of the visor and wallet cards.



Chris Hunter



Col. Robinson

(continued)



State Police director Robinson said deaf and hard of hearing persons are the largest disability population encountered by State Police.

“The goal of law enforcement is to ensure safety,” said Robinson, “and to ensure rights.”

Chris Hunter, director of the Division on Deafness at Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, discussed the importance of Communication Access Needs cards to alert police and others that a driver is deaf or hard of hearing.

Hunter said the new communications tools help bridge the gap between deaf and hard of hearing persons and police, who sometimes misunderstand sign language.

“Police have interpreted some signs as gang signs,” he said.

Communication Access Needs cards became available at Secretary of State offices in early June. The training videos for law enforcement are currently being distributed to law enforcement agencies across the state.

“The videos will be distributed to all 600 police departments in the state,” said Hunter. “We hope that all 23,000 law enforcement officers will eventually see it and receive blue guidelines card.”

The guideline card is a hand-held aid to help police communicate with deaf or hard of hearing persons. It includes common American Sign Language commands.

Deaf or hard of hearing individuals who are interested in obtaining the cards, can also contact the MCDC Division on Deafness toll-free at (877) 499-6232 voice/TTY, email [DOD@state.mi.us](mailto:DOD@state.mi.us) or write to P.O. Box 30659, Lansing, MI, 48909.

## 6W2W in Washtenaw County

**By Susan Reynolds Bunton and Pat Hammond**  
**Washtenaw County Family Independence Agency, Ypsilanti**

The Wellness in Washtenaw County started off with a bang! As staff geared up for the event, we began with a 30-minute walk. We were very lucky the rain began shortly after we had completed our trek.

Washtenaw County had one of the largest groups to participate in the wellness program this year with 95 registered participants with six persons per team. A number of participant teams were very competitive from the start, in selecting team names. Just to name a few we have the Wellness Warriors, Gladiators, Pacesetters and 360 Degrees.

Washtenaw County FIA director Pat Hammond also challenged staff to lose weight. She offered to take the participant who loses the most weight to a restaurant of their choice.

The Washtenaw Wellness Committee recruited outside professionals and also used internal expertise for presentations. Due to popular demand, one of our own FIS staff will redo an excellent presentation on increasing fiber in our diets.

There are other weekly activities scheduled during the six weeks, such as presentations from Weight Watchers, and aerobic instruction.



**Getting healthier in Washtenaw County.** Patricia Thomas and Kina Love take on the machine above.



**Left: Mary Weathers gets an assist from Stacey Mack while Marilyn Watson motions elsewhere.**

# U. P. family wins Community Service Award

**Deanna and Tim Rader of Pickford are parents to 10 children, five adopted, have fostered 200 children since 1974 and recruited other foster parents**

By Leroy Pieri, Social Work Program Manager  
Chippewa County Family Independence Agency, Sault Ste. Marie  
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Congratulations to Deanna and Floyd "Tim" Rader for receiving the Governor's Community Service Award presented at a gala dinner in Grand Rapids May 21. They were selected from among 50 statewide nominees for the "Senior 56 and older" category. The award was given by the Michigan Community Service Commission.

## U. P. lifers

Deanna and Floyd Rader have lived their entire lives almost exclusively in the small Upper Peninsula community of Pickford, located south of Sault Ste. Marie. With five birth children and five adopted children with special needs, the Raders have devoted their family and home to care for children in need as an expression of their family-centered care and love.

Since 1974, they have volunteered to care for almost 200 of the community's foster children, more than half of them adolescents. They are a resource, mentor and active advocates for other parents through the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association and their local chapter. They've recruited eight families into foster parenting including two of their adult children's families.

## A life fostering

More than 25 years ago, Deanna and Floyd Rader became involved with a neighbor boy who was in trouble and his family needed help. Their commitment and desire to be a positive influence for children and families drew them to help this youngster, when they discovered foster parenting.

The Raders have performed their work each day by giving children in need countless hugs, meals, reassuring touches and words, loads of cleaned clothing, smiles, listening ears, sleepless nights of attention, expressions of joy and sorrow, rides, loads of hope and more.

## Skills tested daily

As foster parents, more than half the children they accepted into their home have been adolescent youth. The challenges for these children and the Raders have been extensive and seemingly bottomless—physical and sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, crime, drugs, alcohol, suicide, violence, physical and emotional impairments—all the symptoms and ills in our community. Success for these children is measured in small gains.

## Starting an association

In 1979, the Raders became involved with other foster and adoptive parents for mutual support. Within a year, they formed and since have presided over the local Foster & Adoptive Parents Association.

In 1988, the Raders, through their church, helped establish a local summer camp for youth. The Raders were selected Upper Peninsula Foster Parents of the Year in 1990. Many youth in our community are leading healthier more productive lives because of the Raders.



**Deanna and Floyd "Tim" Rader (center) were presented the Community Service Award by Michigan First Lady Michelle Engler and Russell G. Mawby, chairperson of Michigan Community Service Commission.**

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# A partnership: policy process reengineering

## Status of a strategic initiative

By Charles A. Jones, Director

FIA Office of Reengineering & Quality Management, Lansing

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The Family Independence Agency Strategic Plan includes 47 initiatives designed to help achieve our critical success factors. "Aligning our resources, policy, technology, budget and planning process" is an important critical success factor. An initiative to achieve this critical success factor is the reengineering of the policy development process.

Primary responsibility for policy development resides in the FIA Family Independence Services & Child and Family Services administrations. FIA Field Operations has primary responsibility for implementing policy. The need for policy is generated by a variety of internal and external sources, at times leaving little flexibility regarding implementation dates or the policy itself.

While there are some facets of some policy that FIA does not control, there are areas that we can change. Overall, the current policy development and implementation process has allowed Michigan to become a national leader in welfare reform and other programs. However, there are some aspects of the process that need to be improved. Some of the major reasons for reengineering this process were:

- Lack of field input throughout the process.
- Technology making decisions vs. implementing decisions.
- Quantity and complexity of policy.
- Lack of a good monitoring system to ensure compliance with policy.
- Problems with timely policy distribution.
- Insufficient lead time for training and implementation.

FIA deputy director Mark Jasonowicz convened a panel to determine objectives to be achieved by the reengineered process and to establish the parameters of the project.

The design team was convened, facilitated by the Office of Reengineering and Quality Management.

Some major objectives for this project are:

- Provide for field involvement throughout the process
- Determine a range of options available to solve the problem or effectuate the change
- Develop the capacity to identify, develop, communicate and implement policy effectively
- Ensure better coordination between policy development, technology and training through joint central and local office planning

In March 2001, the design team made 53 recommendations, most of which were approved by the FIA's Executive Management Team. Some of the improvements in the process are:

- A project alert form will be initiated that denotes the major aspects of a change.
- An electronic tracking system will be developed and used throughout the process.
- A project team will be responsible for all policy products. The team will include a sponsor, project manager, policy analyst, trainer and field personnel. A systems representative will be appointed where appropriate.
- A group will review the initial project alert.

The changes recommended call for a strengthened partnership between the field and the policy components in FIA Central Office. They provide for a greater role for the field in the entire policy process. They also include provisions for training; the written development of policy and monitoring by the field after a policy product has been implemented.

The next step in this process is the most difficult—implementation. Team members Ted Forrest, Sue Hall, Patricia Hammond and Carol Thomas have been selected as the project co-leaders to guide implementation of the new process. They will work with the Office of Reengineering and Quality Management to develop a plan to implement the changes.

For more information regarding the policy reengineering recommendations, please see the Office of Reengineering and Quality Management page on the FIA Intranet.